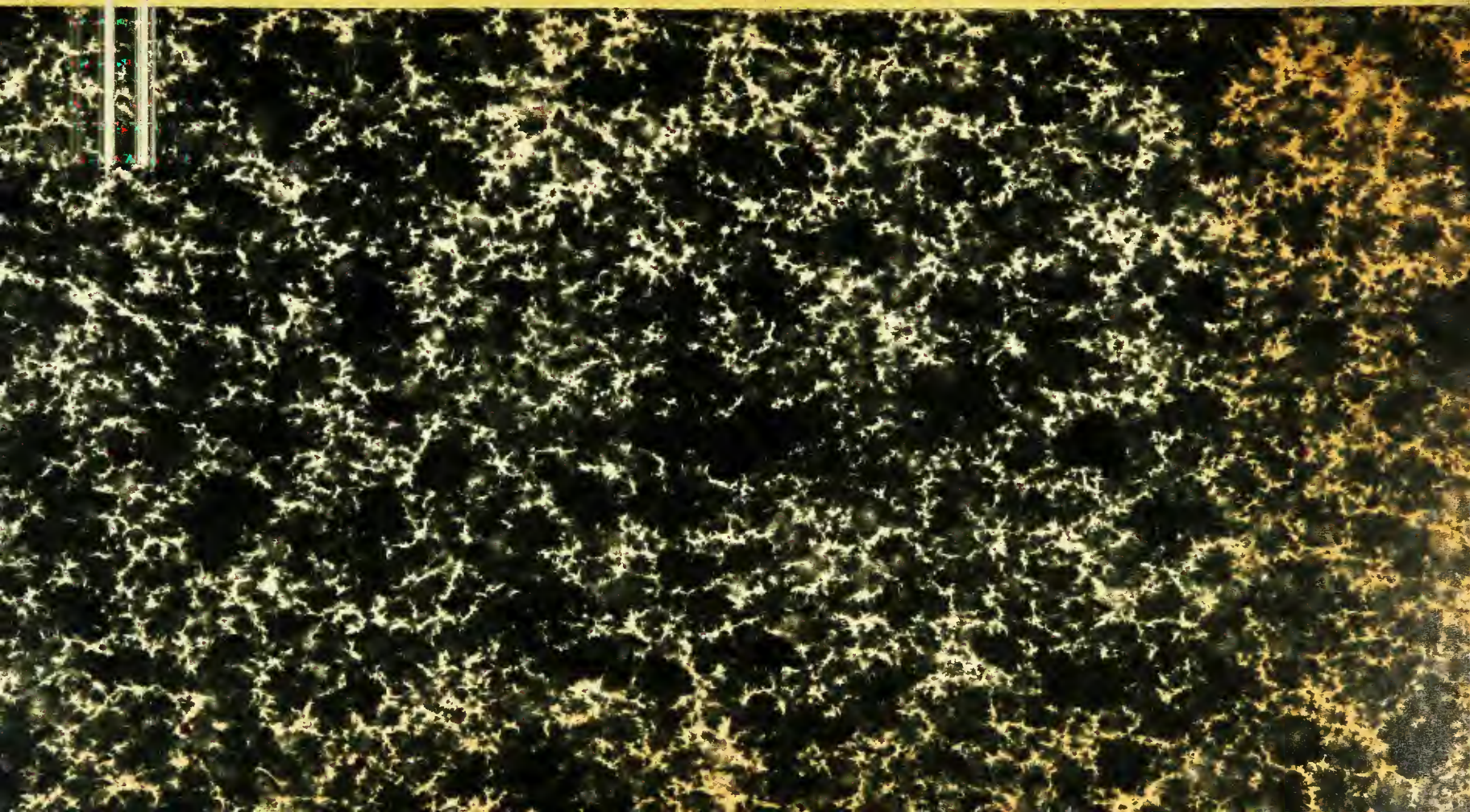
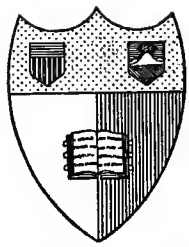
FISKE On the Death of Abraham Lincoln





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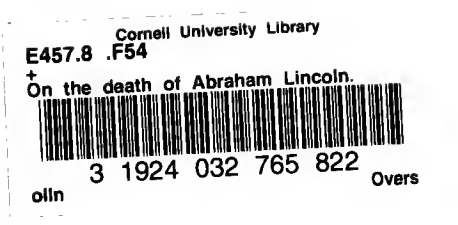
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The Death

of

Abraham Lincoln

On the Death

of

Abraham Lincoln

by

Willard Fiske

FLORENCE
The Landi Press
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One hundred copies

The following lines first appeared, as an untitled editorial note, in the 'Daily Journal' of Syracuse, New York, during the forenoon of that sad day on which the illustrious Chief Magistrate of the United States, after hours of speechless agony, finally breathed his last—martyred, in sight of a terrified world, that Americans of the negro race might become, for all time, men and citizens, instead of slaves and chattels. Written and in type within half an hour after the author had been told of the great crime, they were, at the time, widely copied by

the American newspaper press, and have since been occasionally reprinted at the instance of associations like the 'Grand Army of the Republic,' by patriotic individuals, and by various periodicals, generally, however, with slight errors. They are here reproduced in their original shape.

April 15, 1903.

Slavery and Treason have demanded of the American Republic a great and final sacrifice. For four mournful years, on the battle-field and in the hospital, she has poured out the noble blood of her brave children and offered up the precious lives of her patriot citizens. But a sacrifice of blood still more

noble, of a life still more precious, was needed to make the oblation complete. This last, this fearful offering has now been laid upon the Nation's reeking altar. Abraham Lincoln is dead!

The shaper of the Republic's destiny, he was murdered on the day when that destiny was finally moulded in the matrix of truth and justice. The savior of the Republic's life, he yielded up his own just as the Republic's existence was forever secured. The Commander-in-Chief of our long-battling armies, he sank in death at the

very moment when those armies had achieved a lasting triumph.

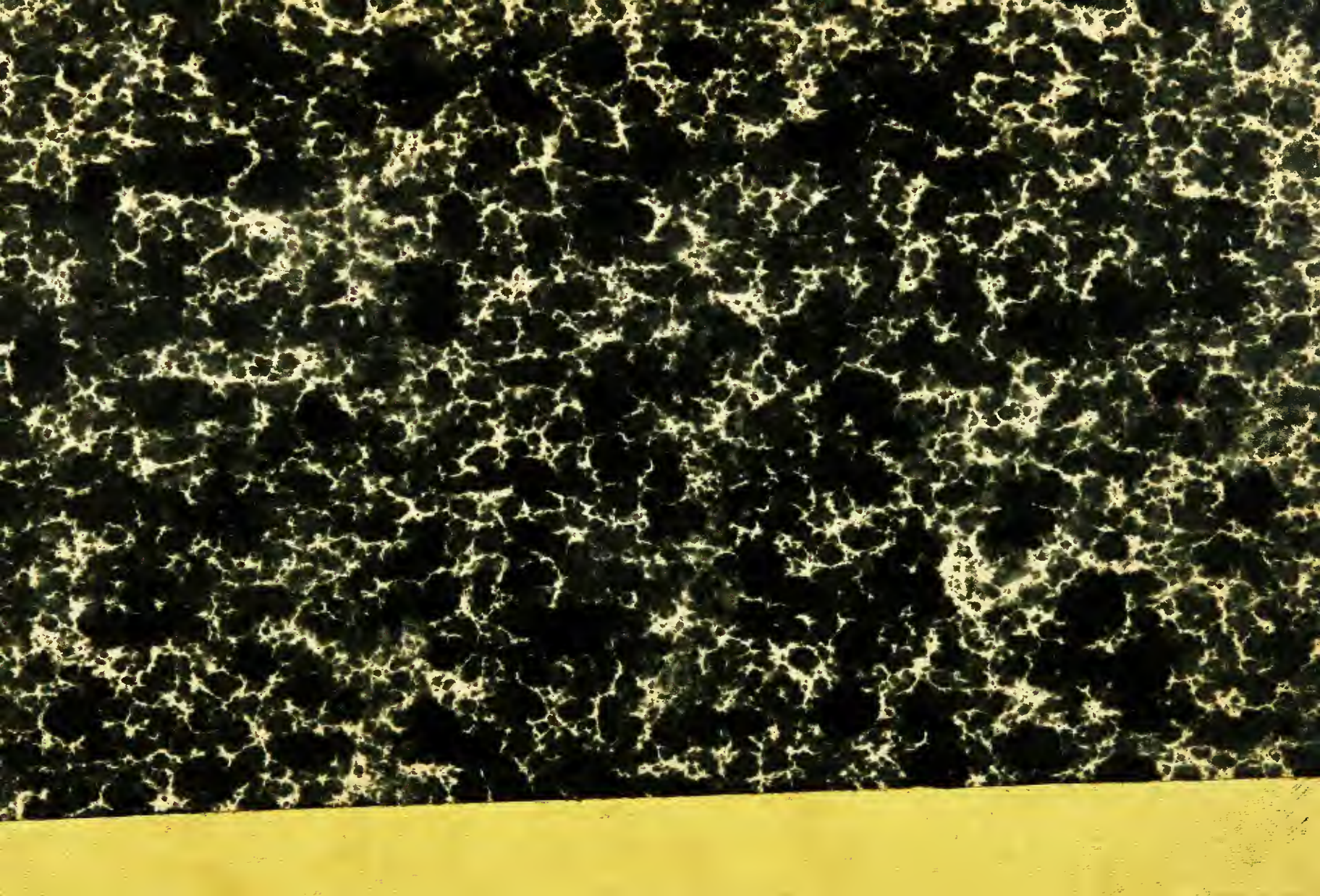
In him was typified, more than ever before in any single individual, the cause of Human Liberty, and he perished in the hour which saw that cause victorious. He so guided the course of events that out of the bitterness of Slavery a whole race entered into the blessedness of Freedom, and he passed out of the world while the clanking echoes of the chains which he had broken had not yet died away. Through a night of storm and terror he steered the trembling

ship of state, and when the morning dawned upon the vessel sailing, with its costly freight, through a placid sea, the hand that had saved it became powerless. Who shall say that, since that other Good Friday, eighteen hundred years ago, when murderous men struck at the existence of Divinity itself, a riper life has been ended by a fouler blow?

The universal signs of sorrow attest the depth and breadth of the People's grief. The saddened Nation clothes itself in black. The church bells toll a requiem which

makes the sorrow-laden air still heavier. Sable festoons adorn, with gloomy decoration, our streets and squares. The minds of men are filled with a woe which the death of a father or brother could not have evoked. But there is a mourning still more appropriate to the occasion than these outer signs or inner feelings. Let us mourn the dead President by being worthy of his greatness. Let us resolve that the liberty which he saved shall never again be lost, that the fetters which he sundered shall never again be joined, that

the Union which he restored shall never again be broken. Let us live for Human Rights as he lived; let us die for them, if need be, as he died.

The Great Republic's head is gone; the Great Republic's heart is broken. God help the Great Republic!

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